DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 163 541 CS 502 323

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TITLE Black Rhetoric of the Sixties: The Problem of Identity.
PUB DATE Jun 78
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Biennial International Colloquium on Verbal Communication (Berndorf, Austria, June 11-16,Q 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Attitudes; *Black Community; Black History; *Black Leadership; Black Power; Communication (Thought Transfer); Community Action; Community Leaders; *Identification (Psychological); *Persuasive Discourse; *Race Relations; Rhetoric; *Speech Communication

ABSTRACT

Black leaders of the 1960s used various methods in attempting to construct an identity for the black community. Communication is the attempt to transform subjective experience into intersubjective reality in which all members of a community participate. In constructing group identity, community spokesmen attempt to define the nature of the community and to propose action that overcomes barriers to the attainment of the community's fully defined identity. Although all the black spokesmen of the 1960s employed these rhetorical resources of definition and action, they approached the problem of black participation in United States society from two main perspectives: integrationist and separatist. An analysis of their rhetoric leads to four general conclusions: (1) the function of rhetoric in identity construction is often antagonistic to its function in promoting cooperative action; (2) separatist rhetoric built identity through fantasies of group potency and triumph; (3) integrationist rhetoric built identity upon the myth of equal participation in society for all but yielded to more militant postures; and (4) the black movement was forced into such radical definitions of community as identification with emerging Third World nations. (Author/GW)

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BLACK RHETORIC OF THE SIXTIES:

THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY

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The 1960's were a critical period of re-evaluation for the American way of life. Explosive economic growth widened the breach between rich and poor to a yawning chasm. International conflict disrupted the routine operation of social mechanisms. The assumptions underlying America's world role were sharply challenged. It was a period of intense re-evaluation of the images and values upon which the society rested. Part of this re-evaluation was the adjustment of the relationship between the races. One hundred years after the emancipation of the slaves, the black race re-asserted its demand for freedom and equality in the American dream. The civil rights movement employed peaceful protest at the beginning of the decade and the strident tones of militants and separatists seemed to dominate the end of the decade.

Any commentary on the racial conflict of this era must take into account the many different viewpoints of the black struggle for liberation. Although each faction called for unity in the struggle, no faction ever attained that unity. Throughout the decade, various black spokesmen attempted to articulate the identity and needs of the black community. This paper will describe the rhetorical process of identifying the black community employed by different spokesmen, each with their own unique perspective. Since the decade produced so many responses to the problem of racial relations, this brief paper can only broadly survey some of the major black spokesmen of the period. The first segment of the paper will provide a theoretical framework considering rhetoric as identity construction. The methods by which the black community was rhetorically provided with identity and direction by black orators will then be examined. Next, the implications that these methods of identification had

for social action will be explored. Finally, we will consider the effects the various definitions of community and plans for action had on the process of negotiation between the black and white races.

I

The phenomenological view of social process has stressed the concept of "intersubjectivity." Alfred Schutz has defined this as "what is common to various individuals."[1] On one level this refers to the bonds of understanding between members of society. On another level, intersubjectivity means the process of <u>how</u> members of society understand one another through taken-for-granted assumptions about their actions or ways of expressing things verbally. In the phenomenological approach, meaning becomes a central concept and this meaning is constructed socially. In the words of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman; "Social order is a human product, an ongoing human production. It is produced by man in the course of his ongoing externalization."[2] Included in this concept of "ongoing externalization" is the process of communication. Communication is an attempt to transform subjective experience into objective reality in which all members of an audience can participate.

Groups, as well as individuals, create their own social worlds. Through the process of rhetoric, the nature of the world is shaped and changed. In a sense, the world is rhetorically created. It is mistaken, however, to take this concept of rhetorical creation too far. The thesis that events are <u>totally</u> maleable and that a speaker is free to create a social world is untenable.[3] Rhetoric can transcend reality, but there are limits to this concept. The

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white community in the United States, for example, could never effectively deny the historical slavery of the black race or the present situation of the economic and political impoverishment of the black community. Situations and conditions can, however, be rhetorically manipulated to heighten or diminish their impact. The way in which facts are selected, given interpretation, and placed in a wider context establishes the rhetorical tone that a speaker may use. These tactics are important to the rhetor attempting to build a community identity.

Human beings live in communities whether they are physical (a town or locality) or psychological and social (community of scholars). As Edmund Husserl pointed out: "To live as a person is to live in a social framework, wherein I and we live together in a community and have the community as a horizon."[4] The "community as a horizon" indicates the framework in which experience takes place. The horizon conditions experience and places it in a framework of meaning. A community may, then, be defined as a social unit that shares bonds of meaning and understanding in everyday life. Rhetoric, in this context, functions as a form of knowledge. More precisely, rhetoric builds up and uses the stock of shared knowledge that constitutes a community. This stock of knowledge includes elements of the social situation for the community and its limits.[5] Thus, a community is not merely a group of people acting in functional ways (growing food, building roads, or writing laws), but also a group of people that in some way shares a vision of existence. These visions involve how the community defines itself with respect to its traditions, how the group defines itself with respect to other groups, and how it will modify its traditions and exist in the future. Robert Scott called these shared visions rhetoric's function of clarification.[6] This process of clarification provides the meaning and direction of the community. Spokesmen for a community employ this

process of clarification and, at the same time modify it. This is a dynamic process, changing with the conditions under which the community exists and mediated by the shifting images that the community hold of itself. It is important to realize that the rhetorical visions of a community are often built upon fantasy and myth. Group fantasies are beliefs about the community that, according to Ernest Bormann, can direct the behavior of the group.[7] The fantasies rise from the subjective experiences of group members. The experiences are placed on a simple, narrative level and each group member compares his experiences to this common stock of fantasy. An explanation of the nature and situation of the community is provided by this process, as well as a feeling of group cohesion. The fantasy experience provides a dramatization of the community identity. When fantasies are raised to heroic, transcendant level, they enter the realm of the mythical. A distinction between fantasy and myth may be drawn according to temporal reference. A fantasy may take place in the present. In nineteenth century America, one could speak of the group fantasy of westward-bound pioneers. With the end of the frontier, the pioneer "spirit" became timeless, a model of the American values of initiative, strength, and bravery. It is possible to fulfill a fantasy, but it is impossible to fulfill a myth. Myth further heightens the consciousness of the historical role and future destiny of the community. Through fantasy and myth, complex realities are reduced to more easily understood images.

The rhetor shapes the identity of the community by emphasizing certain aspects of the community's self-image, by interpreting and re-interpreting the facts of its situation. The notions of "facts" and "truths" in this context can be a problem. What is considered a truthful community image is determined by the sets of beliefs a community holds of itself.[8] These beliefs form the self-concept of the community. Self-concept, however, is not formed in a vac-

uum. In building personal identities, people compare themselves to others in the society that they share. Group identities are built in the same way. In conflict situations, this tendency to compare and contrast becomes even greater. In conflict situations there is a "sharper definition of group boundaries and greater consciousness of kind."[9] A community will sharply define its norms and values to set itself off from outsiders. The greater the intensity of conflict, the greater the tendency to sharply delineate the normative boundaries of the community.

There are two major resources that community spokesmen will invariably use in building the group identity by rhetorical means. The first is the resource of definition. A definition seeks to locate the essence of a thing. This is done by enumerating its outstanding features and by comparing these features to things that it is not. Communities define themselves through their heritage and systems of values, norms and beliefs. The uniqueness of the group are enhanced and given sharper focus by comparison to other communities. This is inevitable. The historical condition of the black community in the United States is tightly bound to the white community. Any attempt to define the black community cannot escape the burden of this social relationship. It is safe to say that any ethnic group will define itself, in part, by contrast to other communities with which it has interacted.

A second major rhetorical resource in the process of building community identity is that of action. In defining a community's historical condition and present social role, rhetors will cite barriers to the attainment of fruitful identity. Conflict calls forth rhetoric, and conflict is inevitable between different communities. As Kenneth Burke has stated;"In pure identification there would be no strife."[10] Since the very notion of community implies divis-

ion, there will be conflict between the definitions and aspirations of different communities. In the case of racial conflict in the United States, the problem of the black community has been one of gaining acceptance in the larger social structure. Once this problem has been posed as an inherent problem for the community identity, possible pathways for effective remedial action must be proposed. In order to be consistent with the process of definition, the proposed actions will be compatible with the values of the group that have been articulated. The values of the community as defined by the rhetor will, therefore, limit the modes of remedial action that can be taken.

Let us now turn to a consideration to the process of identity construction as used by spokesmen for the black community in the 1960's. First, the resources of definition that were used will be considered.

II

The most obvious difference between black people and white people is color. This distinction and the historical fact of slavery posed real limitations on any analogy between the black community in the United States and other immigrant population such as the Irish, Italians, or Eastern Europeans. In addition to this, the psychology of the color black, with its connotations of fear, evil and death in Western civilization, compounded the problems for the identification of the black community.[11] James Farmer, an Assistant Adminstrative Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, stated; "Ten or fifteen years ago, if you called a man black it would have been a fighting word, because he thought black was evil and he would have insisted he was not black. He was brown, bronze, he was tan, but he was not black."[12] This denial of color and

heritage was, in the view of leaders like Stokely Carmicheal, promoted by the dominant white culture who feared blackness. The issue of blackness was the focal point of a debate in the black community that involved the definition of the community and its relationship to the wider social structure.

In his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963, Martin Luther King stated that, "The Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land."[13] We may take this as a statement around which we may crystallize this debate. Broadly speaking, there were two basic responses to this exile. There was, on one hand, a desire to erase disparity between the races and merge with mainstream American life. On the other hand, there were those who accepted the exile in order to establish the basis for a new arrangement of the social and political life of America and the world. We shall begin by establishing the rhetorical constructions of spokesmen who wished to erase racial boundaries and end the exile of the black community.

Martin Luther King, of course, was a towering figure in the civil rights movement. As seen in the above excerpt of his "I Have a Dream" address, King empasized that America is the home of the blackcommunity. No question of a seperate nationality was ever mentioned in his rhetorical construction. The issue was purely one of social justice within the existing framework of American society. The great moral force summoned by Dr. King was the result of his emphasis upon brotherhood and a rededication to the American promise of the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The injustices he saw in American society were not limited to the black community:

> The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers have come to realize that their destiny is tied up

> with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.[14]

This attitude set the tone for most moderate civil rights leaders. The black community is a part of the overall social structure and racial distinction is minimized. The unity of all people in attaining social justice is required. In such a rhetorical view, the interests of the black community were synonomous with the interests of the white community. King viewed the failings of American society as primarily spiritual. By promoting the healing of this spiritual lapse by black community action, King promoted the fantasy of the black community as the moral force which would provide the power to drive the nation back to the unity of the American ideal. This bond with the entire society tied the definition of the black community securely to the social contract of the nation. In such approaches, the black community was identified with the American nation and its values. Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts gave this identification an uncommonly strong expression:

> This is not simply a Negro movement. It is an American movement for the attainment of an American ideal: Any effort to exclude white Americans from the prosecution of this cause is, first, a betrayal of the most profound beliefs and principles of the movement, and second, a barrier to its ultimate success.[15]

This moderate approach dominated the first half of the decade of the 1960's and emphasized the compatiblity of desires of the black and white social communities. It also stressed the assimilation of the black community into American life just as in the case of white ethnic communities.

The major problem with this approach was one of overcoming the prevailing atmosphere of racial stereotypes applied by whites to blacks. Such stereotypes

as laziness, ignorance, and a violent nature were given credibility by statistical profiles of the black community. Whitney Young, executive director of the National Urban League, set the tone for the black response to this in an address before the National Conference of Mayors in 1965.[16] How, he asked, can this assessments of the black situation be fair when the black community did not have equal opportunity? The jobless rate of the black community, the prevalence of welfare recipients, the high incidence of crime in black residential areas, the relatively low educational acheivements were all effects of the social injustice that the black community had suffered for hundreds of years. Consistently, moderate black spokesmen played upon the theme of injustice and social rejection as the reason for the existence of conditions that led to the reinforcement of the stereotypes. The image of the black community could be overcome by full participation in the fruits of social life. The approaches of Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Bayard Rustin of the A. Phillips Randolph Institute stessed the purely economic and educational advancement of the black community. They viewed the black community as an integral part of the white community, if the opportunity was extended. Again, assimilation into society was the goal of these spokesmen. This could be measured by the rising number of middle class blacks and the number of black students completing a course of higher education.

For each of these spokesmen, the identity of the black community was not rigorously bound to color. Color was the basis of discrimination in the past and present and the goal was to transcend this limitation in the future. The demand was for equal opportunity and a first class citizenship that gave full admission to the promise of American life. By and large, this rhetorical vision of the black community stressed the demolition of racial lines and an outlook on life firmly rooted in American values and the American economic and

political system. The past, in these rhetorical constructions, was an ageless story of struggle and strife, but these struggles would serve to strengthen the black soul and help to build an overwhelming moral demand for social justice and equality.

As the decade progressed and the mood of the racial struggle became more somber, some black spokesmen tended to emphasize the positive side of the exile of the black community. This attitude rose from the frustrations encountered in the search for equality and justice. As the civil rights movement met resistance, the very concepts of "equality" and "integration" were called into question. Did the black community really want to become a part of the white culture? Radical elements of the black community criticized the moderate tactics and goals of the civil rights movement. In his explanation of "black power", Stokely Carmicheal insisted that integration meant that the black man who "makes it" in white society leaves his community behind, thus, intergration was a disruptive force robbing energy fom the black movement. As people moved up in the social structure, they would move away from the black community. Even more dangerous was the psychological tendency to view the problems of the black community in a negative manner. In Carmicheal's words it was:

> based on a complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or a decent education, blacks must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces, among black and white, the idea that white is automatically better and black, by definition, inferior.[17]

The concept of assimilation was denounced as a program which would be psychologically damaging to the self-concept of the black community. Implicit in Carmicheal's definition of black power was the attitude that equal opportunity,

defined in terms of white society, was not necessarily a better way of life. In a more radical vein, Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party labeled integration a smokescreen to disguise the status of blacks as that of "colonial subjects."[18] In each of these rhetorical visions, assimilation into the American social structure was portrayed as less than desirable.

In a rhetorical construction that emphasized separation of the black community, color did become a major part of the group identity. Stokely Carmicheal was fond of using the irony of black movie-goers cheering on Tarzan when he brutalized black "savages".[19] He used this vivid illustration as a model demonstrating how the black community had been separated from its heritage. Tarzan represented an image of white colonialism disrupting the social life of Africa and placing the black man in bondage Black power and black pride became verbal symbols of return to the black culture, and an integral part of the definition of the black community. Rather than gaining acceptance as Americans, the black community was to gain acceptance as <u>black people</u>. The group quality of racial heritage was not to be denied for the object of gaining white social acceptance. No term used in the sixties caused so much turmoil as "black power". It touched off heated debate in the black as well as the white segments of society. In its initial exposition by Stokely Carmicheal, black power meant the excerise of political and economic power by the black community.[20] It meant control by the black community where there was a majority, and fair representation where blacks were in the minority. The term "black power", however, was more than a designation given to certain tactics for political action. It became a verbal symbol of the black community's ability to define itself as a social group that could control its own destiny. In 1966, Carmicheal emphasized that it did not mean racial hatred or expulsion of whites from the

civil rights movement, but he did stress the necessity of the black community to define itself, its own program of action, and its desired life style. In this view was an implicit denial of the goals of integration and assimilation into the white culture. In this stance, Carmicheal recognized a need for a distinct identity for the black community.

As time passed, separatist elements became stronger in the rhetoric of black power. By 1969 Carmicheal had even abandoned this theme for a more radical pan-African doctrine which sought to polarize American and European civilization with the third world. He called his earlier vision of black power an unrealistic dream because the black community could not operate "as an independant island surrounded by the hostile white community."[21] In the space of three years, Stokely Carmicheal had greatly radicalized his outlook. The white community was viewed as entirely hostile to black community interests.

It must be noted that the Vietnam war had a profound influence on the tendency toward radical separatism. The conflict posed a dilema for the black community concerning their heritage. Radical spokesmen identified the interests of the black community with the non-white populations of the third world. The values of the white civilization were labeled corrupt and evil and black support of such a system of exploitation was termed suicidal. This was an extension of the Tarzan fantasy that Stokely Carmicheal had used. The black man should cheer for the black "savages" to defeat Tarzan and send him back to Europe. Due to the suffering of the black community, it should feel a kinship with oppressed people around the world. Note the following excerpt from an address by Floyd McKissick, director of the Congress of Racial Equality in 1967:

Every day, black people around the world see hunger,

> suffering, despair, disease and hatred. They see a world of oppression, presided over by a few white people dominating the masses of powerless colored people on every continent. Black men have gained a special insight, an almost privileged perception. It is an insight acquired over many years of opression.[22]

In this view, the white and black races are divided by an irremedial moral gap. The black community is identified by a moral superiority over the white community and a "privileged perception" of life due to its history of oppression. Here, the black community is fantasized as the carrier of higher human values. This moral rhetorical separatism was strongly expressed in the rhetoric of Malcolm X. The Black Panthers employed, at least initially, a classical Marxist analysis of the position of the black community. The black community was treated as a colonial subject of the "white power structure" and exploited as any other colony. Both the Black Panthers and Malcolm X magnified the history of Western civilization to the level of a grand international conspiracy to exploit and subjugate the dark-skinned people of the world. In conjuring up the ultimate evil, the American system was equated with Fascism and the conspiracy was viewed as an attempt to stamp out the black race. The fantasy of genocide, complete with concentration camps and gas ovens, was prevelant in the rhetoric of the Black Panthers to dramatize the struggle as a fight for survival, not merely rights, equality or freedom.

Whether more moderate or radical, rhetorical constructions that accepted the exile of the black community stressed the uniqueness of black culture and sought to keep this alive in some form of separatism. The debate between the two major viewpoints in the black community made any plea for unity futile. Let us now turn to the resources of action employed by the spokesmen of black identity.

III

Action is inevitably bound to choices made by people on the basis of a value structure. Chaim Perelman has noted that; "One appeals to values in order to induce the hearer to make certain choices rather than others and, most of all, to justify those choices so that they may be accepted and approved by others."[23] Since choices of action rest upon a basis of values, the resources of action used by rhetors represent an extension of their vision of the community identity. Action is a part of the community identity in a practical way. One of the functions of rhetoric is to urge the community to action that will fully realize the group identity. In order to be effective, any suggested action must be consistent with the values expressed by the rhetor and reflected by the community.

The moderate civil rights movement advocated tactics that were legal and non-violent in nature. This does not mean that protest takes place without any sort of disruption. Martin Luther King maintained the approach of non-violent protest throughout his career as a crusader for civil rights. He used the tactics of the boycott, the sit-ins, the march and the picket line to create scenes of disruption that drew attention to the problems of racism and poverty. His view of action was rooted in moral conscience, personal commitment and the unity of the brotherhood. King was acutely aware that in order to bring about the ideal of social justice, he had to display the fact that the ideal existed as a promise, but was not yet realized in fact. He had to remind the conscience of the American public of the promise of the American life. In the last public speech Martin Luther King delivered, he said:

All we say to America is, "Be true to what you said

> on paper." If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there.[24]

His basic approach was to make the white community live up to its stated ideals. Action had to be non-violent; first, because that was implicit in the promise of American life; and second, because King saw the choices to be non-violence or non-existence given a world of nuclear weapons. In King's moral vision, the civil rights struggle meant survival, not just for the black community, but for the entire human race. His prescription of non-violent action transcended the situation of the black community to encompass the broader human condition.

Even in the moderate rhetorical constructions, however, the threat of violence was displayed. While deploring the ghetto riots which plagued the summers of the decade, black moderate spokesmen made the point that the riots were to be expected given the conditions under which the black community was forced to live. The threat of violence was a lever with which to move the hesitant government machinery. Note the implicit threat in the following remarks by Roy Wilkins, head of the NAACP:

> While our cities burned this summer and our citizens spat hate and bullets at each other, the Congress remained not cool, but cold. But Congress was only continuing the traditional role of the nation on the race question. Deaf, blind, smug and unheeding Americans brought the riots on themselves.[25]

If the attitude of white America caused the riots, the riots would continue unless steps were taken to absorb the black community into the wealth of the nation. Moderate black rhetors used the riots each summer to spell out the

anger and frustration of the black community. They attempted to harness rhetorically this inarticulate violence to push forward the demand for an equal share of American life and full admission to society. While upholding the values of the ballot, profitable education and the viability of the capitalist system, these spokesmen had to contend with the tensions resulting from the clash of the growing expectations of the black community and the painfully slow operation of democratic machinery. The problem, however, was not merely political in nature. The rhetorical fantasy of the effectiveness of the ballot, governmental action and traditional political pressures could not cope with the social-psychological problem of racial attitudes. The conversion of long-held racial attitudes was recognized as an extremely slow process. Roy Wilkins stated:

> Will the evils of judgement according to skin color be wiped out overnight? I do not beleive so. It would be almost superhuman to expect it. People are people, all with their individual strengths and failings. There are no more instant miracles like the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus.[20]

In this vision, action is a long legal struggle to change living conditions and an even longer social struggle to change attitudes. In this respect, the moderate rhetors faced a crushing challenge in urging legal, non-violent action. It was this very problem of the entrenchment of racial attitudes that gave radical spokesmen an issue to grab.

The moderate rhetorical vision could urge hope and faith in the ability of moral force to heal prejudiced racial attitudes over a long period of time while making more rapid gains in the quality of life. Radical spokesmen denied that any such conversion of attitudes was possible. In their view, the social

structure of the American system was rotten with racism. In 1966 Stokely Carmicheal felt that; "The furor over black power reveals how deep racism runs and the great fear that is attached to it."[27] In these words he portrayed racism as a deep psychological problem in the white community, but a problem that was still resolvable. By 1969, Carmicheal had come to feel that:

> Europe and America must, by definition, keep us oppressed and brainwashed if they are to survive. To keep herself alive and to support her racist, inhuman system, America must suck the lifeblood of Africa and African peoples.[28]

In these words, there was no hope of converting racial attitudes of whites toward blacks. Negative attitudes toward blacks were too deeply ingrained in the social and economic system of the white culture. Carmicheal began to espouse the inevitability of racial war. He portrayed it in almost mythical dimensions as a titanic struggle between ultimate good and ultimate evil. For such an exclusive and absolute concept of the black community, only the violence of racial war was possible. Any gains made by the ballot or legislation were mere sham, a part of a scheme to brainwash the black community.

Compared to Stokely Carmicheal's pronouncements at the end of the decade, the approaches of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party were more moderate. Both beleived in the strict maintainence and self-defense of the black community. In his "Ballot or the Bullet" address of 1964, Malcolm X vented his impatience with the slow progress of the civil rights movement. His views of violent action, however, were restricted to the defense of the black community:

> In areas were the government has proven itself either

> unwilling or unable to defend the lives and property of Negroes, it's time for Negroes to defend themselves... This doesn't mean you're going to get a rifle and form battalions and go out looking for white folks, although you'd be justified; but that would be illegal and we don't do any thing illegal.[29]

Although an exponent of pan-African union, Malcolm X did not envision racial war as inevitable. He did not view black as Americans but, rather, Africans. He portrayed the black community as an African enclave within the heart of America. The citizens of this enclave had a right to defend themselves from foreign aggression.

The self-defense plan advocated by Malcolm X was echoed by the Black Panther Party later in the decade. As noted earlier, the Black Panthers rhetorically identified the black community as colonial subjects of American imperialism who were justified in defending their community. The Black Panthers, however, went beyond the separatism of Malcolm X to view the black community as the vanguard of an avowedly revolutionary movement to overthrow the "white imperialist power structure.." Ironically, the Black Panthers joined in the criticism of the ghetto riots, but for a very different reason than moderate black spokesmen. Huey Newton, Minister of Defense of the party, regarded the ghetto riots as "sporadic, short-lived and costly in violence to the people."[30] He advocated guerrilla warfare that could be organized for prolonged resistance. As an expression of anger toward the white power structure, the riots were rhetorically useful; but for effective militant action, they lacked the organization and purpose to accomplish any revolutionary ends. Black Panther spokesmen uniformly propagated the fantasy of a potent, unified black community rising up to overthrow the white American power structure.

Despite rhetoric that was liberally sprinkled with terms such as "white

Imperialist power structure", both Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party denied charges that they were as racist as the system they fought. They defined the black community in direct opposition to the values of white American society, but contended that white people were just as oppressed by this social system as their black brethren. The enemy was not so much white people as it was an exploitative, imperialist juggernaut that threatened the survival of the black race. The extreme nature of this threat to the black community justified the revolutionary actions proposed by these radical black rhetors. It cannot, however, be denied that the white community was defined as inherently hostile to the aspirations of the black community. This racial stereotype may indeed be viewed as racist. The radicals hoped to create a strong group cohesion by sharply polarizing the identity of the white and black races.

IV

Rhetoric in its function of identity construction is sometimes antagonistic to the role of rhetoric in inducing co-operation between groups. The function of identity construction is directed inward. It is a process of building a group self-concept that, of necessity, stresses potency, pride and self-worth. Insofar as group identity construction often takes place by opposition to other groups, the rhetoric of identity building can damage the efforts of rhetoric designed to negotiate with other groups in a society. This was the dilema faced by the black movement in the 1960's. Although there were numerous calls for group cohesion in the struggle for social equality and political power, the black community was torn by the choices of integration and separation. Since these choices involved two very different directions for community definition and plans for action, there was little chance that the gap between these choices

for the black community could be closed. Because of their heavy reliance on fantasies based on power, triumph and pride, the militant spokesmen captured the imaginations of disgruntled ghetto-dwellers. These people who were powerless, poor and frustrated revelled in the fantasy of revolutionary action. This response forced moderate civil rights leaders into more forceful rhetorical postures, damaging their credibility with white political leaders.[31] It makes very little difference that few members of the black community actually joined militant organizations or engaged in guerrilla warfare against the white social system. The strident rhetoric of black radicals captured the attention of the mass media, appealed strongly to the newly awakened racial pride of the black community, and resulted in the loss of some liberal white support for the civil rights movement.[32] Radical spokesmen made rhetorical capital of the atmosphere of distrust fostered by a political system that reacted slowly to social problems.

Moderate black spokesmen defined the black community as a legitimate segment of American society. They were not as concerned with the rhetoric of identity construction as they were with the rhetoric of intergroup relations. While not entirely denying the reality of skin color, the relevance of color in the moderate approach to community identification was minimized. Since the moderate definition of the goals of the black community was based on the concepts of democratic process and social justice, the moderate spokesmen promoted the fantasy of gradual assimilation of the black community into the mainstream of American life. When progress toward this goal did not meet the expectations of the poorest and most frustrated segments of black society, the stage was set for a rhetorical redefinition of the community identity. As radical spokesmen helped fuel rising black pride, the inability of the white community to

adjust to this redefinition led the separatist to condemn white social structure as inherently racist. By provoking this white rejection, the radicals robbed force from the moderate program of hope for a gradual victory over negative racial attitudes.

The black movement of this crucial decade did not take place in a vacuum. The nationalist movements of Third World countries reinforced the growing identity of the American black community. Kinship with these nations was proudly pointed out. By identifying American blacks with the liberation of the Third World, radical separatists attempted to isolate psychologically the community identity from the mainstream of American culture. It was a process of separation rather than segregation. Segregation was a process of racial isolation enforced by the white community. Separation was a choice made by the radical spokesmen of the black community to define their own identity. Given the explicit and implicit policy of segregation practiced by the white majority in America for one hundred years after the emancipation of the slaves, perhaps the reaction of radical black separation was to be expected.

There were two distinct modes of rhetoric employed by the black movement. As noted earlier, these were the rhetoric of identification and the rhetoric of social negotiation with other groups. Perhaps this can serve as a model for any social situation where an ethnic community cannot resolve its problems of identity. A social group is a part of wider social system or nation. However, in order to counteract racial stereotypes, political powerlessness and poor economic position; the social group will tend to build up its self-concept. If the relationship between the minority and majority groups have not been conducive to building responsive social institutions and an atmosphere of trust and acceptance, radical identity construction is more likely to occur. The negotiations between social groups in the present cannot easily escape the conditions of the past.

Footnotes

1. A. Schutz, On Phenomenology and Social Relations, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) p. 319

2. P. Berger and T. Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, (New York: Anchor Books, 1967) p.52

3. This is a position maintained by Richard Vatz in "The Myth of Rhetorical Situation", Philosophy and Rhetoric, 6(Summer, 1973) p. 154-161.

4. E. Husserl, Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965) p. 150

5. Berger and Luckmann, p.41

6. Robert Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later", Central States Speech Journal, 27 (Winter, 1976) p. 261

7. E. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision", Quarterly Journal of Speech, 58 (December, 1972) p.399

8. C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric, (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969) p. 69

9. T. Shibutani and K. Kwan, "The Formation of Contrast Conceptions", in Racial Conflict, Gary Marx (ed.) (Boston:Little, Brown and Co., 1971) p. 268

10. K. Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962) p. 549

11. For a consideration of the rhetorical use of the light/dark metaphor apart fromracial uses see, Micheal Osborn, "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light - Dark Family," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 53 (April, 1967) p. 115-126

12. James Farmer, untitled transcript of a speech given at the Maxwell School of Business, Syracuse University, October 25, 1968.

13. Martin Luther King, "I Have A Dream", in The Voices of Black America, Vol. 2 Philip Foner (ed) (New York: Capricorn Books, 1972) p. 356

14. King, "I Have A Dream", p. 357

15. Edward Brooke, "The Cause of Civil Rights", in The Voices of Black America, Vol. 2, p. 450

16. Whitney Young, "The Positive Side of the Racial Story", transcript of a speech delivered before the U. S. Conference of Mayors, May 31, 1965.

17. Stokely Carmicheal, "What We Want" New York Review of Books, 7 (Sept. 22, 1966) p. 5

18. Eldridge Cleaver, "The Land Question", Ramparts 6(May, 1968) p. 51-53

19. Carmicheal, "What We Want", p. 6

20. Carmicheal, "What We Want", p. 5

21. Carmicheal, "We Are All Africans", The Black Scholar, 1 (May, 1970) p. 18

22. Floyd McKissick, transcript of speech at the National Conference on Black Power, July 21, 1967.

23. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric, p. 75

24. King, " I've Been to the Mountain Top", transcript of a speech delivered in Memphis, Tenn., April 3, 1968

25. Roy Wilkins, "Morality and Civil Rights", transcript of a speech given at Brandeis University, December 5, 1967.

26. Wilkins, "Full Speed Ahead", transcript of a speech given at the Youth Awards Dinner at the NAACP Convention, July 3, 1969.

27. Carmicheal, "What We Want", p. 6

28. Carmicheal, "We Are All Africans" p. 16

29. Malcom X, "The Ballot or the Bullet", in The Voice of Black America, p/ 383-384

30. Huey Newton, "In Defense of Self-Defense", New Left Notes, Feb. 12, 1969

31. Herbert Simons, "Patterns of Persuasion in the Civil Rights Struggle," Today's Speech, 15 (February, 1967) p. 25-27

32. Joyce Ladner, "White America's Response to Black Militancy", in Black America, John Szwed (ed.), (New York: Basic Books, 1970) p. 205-218

Note: Speech transcripts were supplied through the courtesy of Dr. Raymond Yeager, Professor of Speech, Bowling Green State University.